



PROBLEMS OF LABOUR MIGRATION FROM BIHAR

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ABSTRACT

More than half of the households in Bihar are exposed to migration to more developed places within or outside the state or country and majority of households depend on remittances for their livelihood. Highest migration occurs in the traditional migration pockets of Saran, Munger, Darbhanga, Kosi, Tirhut and Purnia. Seasonal migration is highest in Kosi, Tirhut and Purnia divisions. The migration is highest from other caste groups followed by OBCs, SCs and STs. Due to persistent widespread poverty and under development, migration from this region continued even after Independence and mainly remained confined to the developed western states of the country. Recently, this region also showed a significant rise in trend of international migration towards the Gulf destinations. The continuum of two-century-old association between migration and poverty has led to the “culture of migration” in Middle Ganga Plain. It has been observed that migration is highest for the landless group and nuclear families in Bihar. The most important outcome of migration is remittance which influences the process of development and brings change in the consumption pattern and lifestyle of the individual.

KEY WORDS: Migration, Poverty, Households, Development and Livelihood.

INTRODUCTION:

The green revolution accelerated the pace of development creating a demand for labour in northwestern India. At the same time, the poor implementation of land reforms, as well as a lack of industrial investments in Bihar, left the state under-developed. Low growth, high levels of poverty and the ‘semi---feudal’ systems of agricultural production, where the upper castes controlled land and power, encouraged outmigration. From the mid--- 1960s onwards, Punjab and Haryana emerged as the prime destination for the migrant labour from Bihar. The roots of labour outflow from post---independence Bihar can be traced to this era.

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Due to persistent widespread poverty and under development, migration from this region continued even after Independence and mainly remained confined to the developed western states of the country. Recently, this region also showed a significant rise in trend of international migration towards the Gulf destinations. The continuum of two-century-old association between migration and poverty has led to the “culture of migration” in Middle Ganga Plain. It has been observed that migration is highest for the landless group and nuclear families in Bihar. The average age of migrants is 32 years. Eighty per cent migrants are landless or have less than one acre of land and 85% of them have passed Class X. Ninety per cent of the migrants work in private factory or as casual workers. Average remittance by a migrant is Rs 26,020 in Bihar.

As far as the status of women in migrants’ local households is concerned, 47% women are literate and 22% of them work for wages. Majority of the left behind women in Bihar lives in nuclear family. Three-fourth of the left behind women communicate with their husband daily on mobile. Only 29% women are members of self-help groups and 80% women have their own bank accounts.

Wives of both migrants as well as non-migrants feel that economic status, lifestyle, autonomy, education and health of children improve after the migration of their husbands.

Seasonal migration is more predominant in Bihar, as 90% of the seasonal migrants are from Bihar. While 31% from Bihar migrated to Punjab, 27% from UP migrated to Maharashtra. Nearly 46% of seasonal migrants bring cash at the end of the month and 48% operate through banking system.

75% migrants perceived improvement in their family income, family bonding and social status after their return. As many as 25% of them want to migrate again while two-thirds would encourage their children to migrate for employment. The most important outcome of migration is remittance which influences the process of development and brings change in the consumption pattern and lifestyle of the individual. “Remittances result in increase in wealth of the family and consequential improvement in education and nutrition of the members of the household and greater use of hospital facilities during times of illness of the family

members.

Changing cropping pattern, mechanization of agriculture, long phase of terrorism and violence against migrant labour affected Punjab’s image as a popular migration destination. Besides, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and National Capital Region (NCR--- Delhi) were emerging as hubs of industrial growth and subsequently also of the service sector (IIPA, 2010). By the mid---1990s, these states had become preferred destinations for Bihar’s migrant labour.

There are an estimated 4.4 to 5 million labour migrants from Bihar working in the other parts of the country (IIPA, 2010). However, this trend appears to have risen sharply in the last few years. The third most populous state in India, 55.3 percent of rural Bihar lives below the poverty line (Datta, 2016). The State witnessed rapid economic growth in the last decade, however, this growth was confined to the secondary and tertiary sectors, thereby surpassing the disproportionate majority, who reside in rural areas and are dependent on the agricultural sector, as small and marginal farmers. Outmigration has assumed greater significance due to the ‘(de)---agrarianising and highly mobile’ nature of rural Bihar, where a lack of employment opportunities is combined with a rising demand for labour in other parts of the country.

Rural to rural migration comprise over 79 percent of the total migrants of the state (NSS, 2008). Only about 12 percent of Bihar’s migrants fall in the category of rural to urban migrants. Delhi is the most popular destination for labour migrants from the state, accounting for 28 percent migrant workers from Darbhanga district. Another important destination is Punjab, where 20 percent of migrants from Bihar are engaged in both rural and urban areas in districts such as Jalandhar and Ludhiana. 9 percent of Bihar migrants are found in Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai, Bhiwandi, Pune. Other important destinations are Haryana, Gujarat and West Bengal, the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are also destinations. However, agricultural sector continues to engage 16 percent of all migrant workers, who largely come from the poorer districts of northern Bihar such as Purnia and Araria. Work sectors are highly variant depending upon the source district, as well as the socio---economic status of the migrant worker.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Being a recent move, there have been various researches on different aspects of the initiative ranging from the economical to social and ethical dimensions. Some of these researches retrieved through internet searches have been reviewed here.

Smita (2008), seasonal drought and lack of work in villages in India force entire families to migrate for several months every year in search of work merely to survive. Children accompany their parents, and, as a result, dropout rates from school go up. Similarly, there have been situations in Moldova when children leaving the country with their parents have dropped out of school to work in the host country.

Keshri and Bhagat (2011) point out that “...Although the census covers the entire population, it fails to provide information on shortterm and temporary migration.

Das and Saha (2013) have used various socio-economic indicators to establish that, in general, migrants move from less-developed regions of the country to relatively more-developed regions of the country. Over time, the role of urbanization in influencing the spatial pattern of internal migration in India has been studied extensively in literature along with the ensuing policy challenges of correcting regional imbalances in development.

Das and Das, (2014) A study conducted on the Tripuri tribe of Tripura finds that though educational status of children improves after migration but they do not get adequate facilities to enrol themselves in good schools as the cost of living in the urban areas is very high.

OBJECTIVES:

The Main objectives of this paper is based on following headings:

- To Examine the Causes of labour migration from Bihar.
- To Evaluate the Solutions of labour migration problem in Bihar.

METHODOLOGY:

The method used in this paper is descriptive-evaluative method. The study is mainly review based. It is purely supported by secondary source of data, i.e. books, journals, papers and articles and internet.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS:

Furthermore, the more vulnerable rural to rural migrants, who work in agricultural labour at the destination, largely come from the most impoverished districts of Purnia and Araria, as compared to migrants from better off districts such as Nalanda and Rohtas, who have a better representation in education and professional services. In these representative districts, the largest proportion of migrants comes from the upper caste, landed Hindu and Muslim communities. However, migration is also popular among lower class Muslims, and Other Backward Classes (OBC) I belonging to a lower income quintile and owning minimal land. In fact, the greatest rate of increase in migration, over 20 percent between 1999 and 2011 was observed among the Scheduled Castes (SC), as well as landless and agricultural labouring communities (Datta, 2016). These also constitute the groups who migrate for a short term to work in casual and irregular employment at the destination. This signals towards the fact that vulnerable communities from Bihar are increasingly relying on migration to undertake precarious work as a strategy to cope with the falling productivity of agriculture and lack of employment opportunities in rural regions of the state.

Rural Bihar is fraught with challenges, including widespread poverty and economic stagnation due to low agricultural productivity, coupled with lack of investments in industrial development. Economic growth has been concentrated in the tertiary sector and largely confined to Patna, the state capital. Three-quarters of rural Bihar is employed in the agricultural sector as marginal farmers or agricultural labourers, with very low returns (Rodgers et al, 2013). It has been argued that 'semi-feudal' systems of production continue in these regions, where power and land is concentrated in the hands of the upper castes. Caste, class and land ownership remain determinants of social, economic and political power. Migrant households, in particular, remain politically excluded, as they are away making a livelihood, rendering them unable to seek reform or entitlements. Rural Bihar is poorly governed, with the vast majority of households having low access to basic social protection such as PDS, NREGA or various government pension schemes. A lack of investment in basic services and infrastructure has also affected rural households, who face barriers in accessing education or primary healthcare.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LABOUR WELFARE:

Ensuring financial inclusion and social security linkages:

While financial inclusion is low throughout the country, it is particularly so for migrant communities, due to their high mobility and low credit worthiness. These are also the communities that are dependent on remittances, and tend to be highly indebted. Linkages to social protection available at the workplace, such as the ESIC, are very low. However, existing state schemes, the private sector and microfinance institutions continue to exclude migrant communities. Innovations in product design and delivery in order to ensure the access of migrants to banking and insurance, as well as linkages to social security, at par with local workers, is a necessity.

Dignified living arrangements for migrant workers:

The vast majority of migrant workers live in sub-optimal rented rooms in slums and unauthorised colonies. In this scenario, low cost rented accommodation or workers hostels for migrant workers on a sharing basis in high migrant density clusters can make a large difference. These can include mess services or community kitchens to provide cheap and healthy food to workers.

CONCLUSION:

The main reasons for the vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers at the destination, as well as all casual, informal workers is the precarious nature of their work and living conditions. In order to create a strong and sustainable institutional response, it is necessary to engage with employers in the construction and industrial sectors at major destinations. A large component of precarity faced by all

workers is due to the lack of basic amenities and unsafe environment at both the work and living spaces, leading to workplace accidents and occupational health issues.

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